Saskatchewan
Agriculture
and Food

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

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Communications Branch, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
Contact: Sharon Schmidt
101-3085 Albert Street, REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN S4S OB1
Telephone: (306) 787-5160, Fax: (306) 787-0216
Internet Page: http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca

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Log Number: 07-04-16
Week of January 22, 2007

NEW GENERATION SAYS YES! TO AGRICULTURE

"There is so much focus on the way it used to be. We need more focus on how it is *going* to be. We need to be able to get into people's heads that things are changing."

That is the vision of Lynden Butler, the chairman of the Young Ag-Entrepreneurs, and the focus of an upcoming conference aimed at showcasing the new organization.

The "YES! to Agriculture" conference runs February 2 to 4 at the Saskatoon Inn.

The Saskatchewan Young Ag-Entrepreneurs (SYA) is a new and dynamic group, active at both a provincial and national level. As a provincial affiliate of the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum (CYFF), the SYA's goal is to provide a networking opportunity for young ag-entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan so that they can exchange ideas and access development opportunities.

SYA also raises funds to allow members to travel across Canada in order to meet other young agricultural entrepreneurs, helping them to make contacts in industry and government in order to advance skills such as business development.

Anyone between the ages of 18 and 40 who is involved in production and agri-business can be an SYA member. It provides a motivational platform for young people in agriculture to help shape the future of the industry in the province.

SYA has been around for over a year, and is looking for an opportunity to show people what it is all about. Butler says the YES! to Agriculture conference provides that opportunity.

"The conference is sort of the kick-off for us. We've got a lot of interest, but we need a big event to show people what we can provide," he noted.

Butler says there are a number of sessions over the three-day conference designed to empower the next generation of producers by giving them the tools they need to succeed. "We've got sessions on everything from environmental planning to business planning. We've got sessions on the value chain, as well as two workshops offered through Farm Credit Canada's AgriSuccess program."

(more)

Butler says that, beyond the education and information exchange, the chance to meet other young farmers is a key component of the conference.

"You can't predict the future from the past because of the way things are changing so rapidly in the agricultural industry," he stated. "We need to have that network out there and to be able to talk to peers in the industry. We need to be able to look at it from the inside out; and we need to be talking to a peer group that is looking to the future, not looking to the past."

To learn more about the YES! to Agriculture conference, SYA, and future SYA events, call the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377, or e-mail inquiries to saskyoungag-ent@hotmail.com.

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For more information, contact:

Lynden Butler, Chair
Saskatchewan Young Ag-Entrepreneurs
Phone: (306) 373-2464
Cell: (306) 260-5645

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BOOSTER SHOT FOR U OF S VACCINE CENTRE

A proposed international vaccine centre at the University of Saskatchewan has received a boost from the federal government.

Health Minister Tony Clement was in Saskatoon this month to announce an additional $25 million for the International Vaccine Centre (InterVac). InterVac will be the first facility of its kind in the world to focus on vaccine development for both animal and human pathogens.

When completed, it will be one of the largest vaccine research labs in North America, with leading edge facilities not found anywhere else on the continent.

Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. David Butler-Jones, says better understanding of animal disease, especially in large animals, will help researchers learn more about human diseases and how to fight them. These diseases, like Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) and West Nile Virus, threaten both human health and the livestock industry.

"Some 80 per cent of emerging human diseases originated in animals," said Butler-Jones. "Everything from plague itself to influenza to tuberculosis to measles."

The centre would have the capacity to study up to 180 cows or 5,000 chickens.

The University of Saskatchewan's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) is a key group behind the push to make the $110 million dollar project a reality. VIDO Director Lorne Babiuk says that infectious diseases are not a local issue. "Infectious diseases do not have passports," he said.

VIDO is hoping to secure the final piece of the InterVac project funding in the near future. The federal government previously committed $24 million, the Government of Saskatchewan provided $25 million and the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) provided $32 million. The University of Saskatchewan contributed $3 million and the City of Saskatoon provided $750,000.

InterVac construction is expected to begin this spring and be completed by 2010. The laboratory will be owned and operated by the University of Saskatchewan.

(more)

VIDO was created in 1975 with a mandate to develop vaccines for the protection of livestock against serious and economically devastating diseases, and to ensure that technology reached the producer. It has gone from a staff of five, temporarily housed in trailers, to a new name, a brand new state-of-the-art building, and more than 140 employees and researchers occupying 100,000 square feet.

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For more information, contact:

Tess Laidlaw, Communications Officer
Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization
Phone: (306) 966-1506
Fax: (306) 966-7478

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SUPPORT PLANS HELP RURAL AREAS ATTRACT IMMIGRANTS

Various sectors of the Saskatchewan agricultural and food processing industries, as well as many individual farm operations, are struggling with labour shortages. At the same time, most rural areas of the province would dearly love to bolster their populations with an influx of new families.

Immigration can provide a key piece of the puzzle on both fronts, but Lyle Selinger, a Human Resource Consultant with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, points out that attracting immigrants to settle in smaller communities is really only half the battle—retaining them is another matter altogether.

"Research suggests that the key factors that attract immigrants to a community include the presence of social and cultural networks and better employment and educational prospects," Selinger said. "If a community has a support plan in place, it will foster social, economic and cultural integration for immigrants, and strengthen the recruitment and retention of skilled workers in rural Saskatchewan."

A community support plan is a settlement and integration action plan developed by employers and other local stakeholders to address the settlement needs of immigrants nominated through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP). According to Selinger, a successful community support plan is based on community consensus, engagement and action, and creates a "welcoming community" for immigrants by providing practical support services and cross-cultural mentoring necessary to help them adapt smoothly to their new environment.

Employers wishing to sponsor immigrants through the SINP receive additional points in the consideration process if they develop or participate in a community support plan or employer support plan. "This is done to encourage employers to help ensure a good support network is in place for the workers and families they might want to bring into the province, and to better assist them in adapting to the new culture they will be facing when they arrive here," Selinger said.

Selinger noted that community support plans are usually quite comprehensive, covering several elements. Participants will want to consider how they might aid newcomers in areas such as finding accommodation; community orientation; language training; schooling for children; health care needs; transportation needs; cross-cultural training; social, cultural and recreational opportunities; and spousal employment.

(more)

"These are all factors that affect a new family's sense of belonging in a community, and influence them to remain there once they have settled. The absence of supports in these areas is often cited as a major reason why immigrants sometimes leave smaller towns for larger centres," Selinger said.

"With the level of hospitality and 'good neighbourliness' found in rural Saskatchewan, making people feel welcome often seems like second nature to the people living there. However, it sometimes just requires a little bit of effort to develop it into a more concerted plan that can be followed to meet the particular needs immigrant families often have."

Rural communities or employers interested in finding out more about developing support plans as a means of attracting and retaining new immigrants can speak with Lyle Selinger at (306) 682-6722, or e-mail him at lselinger@agr.gov.sk.ca.

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For more information, contact:

Lyle Selinger, Human Resource Consultant, Livestock Development Branch
Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
Phone: (306) 682-6722
E-mail: lselinger@agr.gov.sk.ca

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LOW-STRESS PIG HANDLING FOR HOGS AND PRODUCERS

Nancy Lidster compares herding pigs to being "it" in a game of tag in a small, crowded gymnasium: everyone is trying to dodge away in the exact opposite direction to avoid you at all costs.

Lidster has spent the last six years teaching people in the pork industry how to handle hogs with a lot less stress for both human and animal. She is holding several workshops this spring at which producers can learn how to become better and more humane hog handlers. The first workshop takes place on January 31 from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Ramada Hotel in Saskatoon.

Nancy and her husband Don raised pigs themselves for approximately 20 years before Nancy was inspired by a Bud Williams stockmanship seminar she attended. The Williams methods for handling cattle sparked ideas in Lidster about how to handle hogs, and in 2001, the Lidsters emptied their barns to focus solely on teaching low-stress pig handling to others in the industry. They also make training videos on virtually all aspects of pig production, from conception to ventilation.

"It was sort of a matter of self-preservation and frustration," said Lidster of her decision to attend that first workshop. "Taking videos of our farm, in our barns, and reviewing them to find out what we were missing in the equation to be able to move stock more easily."

From the early videos, Lidster moved into teaching some of the Williams methods to her fellow producers.

"We found out that, quite often, we figure we're the only ones in the industry that have a particular problem, but when you get talking, you find out that other people are facing similar challenges," she said.

Lidster started taking videos of other producers and industry players and analyzing techniques that seemed to work for lower stress handling. Some of those videos are used during her workshops. Lidster also invites producers planning to come to her sessions to submit videos of their own operations for her to watch and analyze prior to attending the seminars.

Workshop topics included working with pigs' survival instincts; recognizing fear, stress and distress in the animals and what it means; using your position effectively to move the pigs; and setting up to elicit the response you want from the animals.

(more)

"We expect pigs to act in ways that they actually don't act. A lot of times, we're going to instinctively try to chase them. It's a matter of understanding how to use our position so pigs will do what we want them to do rather than fight us," said Lidster.

Registration is still available for the January 31 workshop, but space is limited, so Lidster recommends registering as soon as possible.

If you miss the cut-off for the January 31 workshop, there are other workshops being held throughout the spring, all in Saskatoon at the Ramada Hotel from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. The other workshop dates are: Wednesday, February 28; Wednesday, March 28 and Wednesday, April 25.

To register for any of the sessions, contact DNL Farms by phone at (306) 276-5761 or by e-mail at dnlfarms@xplornet.com.

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For more information, contact:

Nancy Lidster
DNL Farms Ltd.
Phone: (306) 276-5761
E-mail: dnlfarms@xplornet.com
Website: www.pighandling.com

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WINTER SEMINAR FROM IHARF GOES JANUARY 31

The Indian Head Agricultural Research Foundation (IHARF) is holding its Winter Seminar and Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, January 31 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Indian Head Memorial Hall. Producers, IHARF members, and all other interested individuals are encouraged to participate in this event.

Guest speakers will discuss several key agricultural issues at the Winter Seminar. Scheduled topics include: grain market update; bagged grain storage – a low-cost alternative; an update of the Greenseeker™ optical sensor technology and its ability to manage nitrogen levels in wheat, canola, oats and barley crops; perennial weed management of Canada thistle and dandelions; nitrogen management in oilseed crops including sunflower, canola-quality *Brassica juncea*, canola and flax; greenhouse gas measurements; and use of fungicides.

In addition, IHARF will give an update on its work with the Greenseeker™ technology, which measures the Normalised Difference Vegetative Index (the amount of biomass present) and translates that information into how much nitrogen is required to meet potential yield. "There's an algorithm that we're developing that will relate the measurement taken – for wheat it's at about six weeks of growth – and compare that to what the potential yield is and then you add nitrogen accordingly," said McKell.

Another presentation will take into account one of the "hotter" topics in current events these days: greenhouse gases. McKell says greenhouse gas measurement is becoming more of a reality on the farm, especially since farmers have been able to sell some carbon credits onto the market. The greenhouse gas presentation will address measuring nitrous oxide, which McKell said is important to get a handle on, since it's a much worse greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. "Measurement will let farmers know whether they're producing it (nitrous oxide) and if they need their carbon to offset it, or just where they are in terms of greenhouse gas production," said McKell.

Registration begins at 9:00 a.m., and the attendance fee is $10, which includes lunch. IHARF's annual general meeting will follow the seminar presentations. To register, contact IHARF at (306) 695-4200.

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(more)

For more information, contact:

Judy McKell
Indian Head Agricultural Research Foundation
Phone: (306) 695-4200
E-mail: judymckell@sasktel.net